THE HINDU

Today's Paper » FEATURES » FRIDAY REVIEW

Published: August 6, 2010 00:00 IST | Updated: August 6, 2010 04:12 IST

Scriptures as a way of life

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ORATOR Velukkudi Krishnan shares his experience, Bliss, to be specific, through upanyasam. V. BALASUBRAMANIAN



rich in content: Velukkudi Krishnan. Photo: N. Sridharan

P eople's taste may vary when it comes to small screen entertainment in the evening, with soaps and cinema topping the list. But mornings, 6-7, are generally dominated by one voice. Gruff and soothing at once, the Tamil is both chaste and familiar.

The style is lucid, diction clear and the content rich. All of these makes the audience, drawing room or public halls, listen to Velukkudi Krishnan in rapt attention.

His lineage

“My grandfather wanted at least one of his five sons to be brought up the traditional way, acquiring knowledge in Vedanta and Sastra and spreading Dharma,” Krishnan traces his lineage when this writer meets him at his residence on Bheema Sena Garden Road, Royapettah, Chennai.

After completing Class V, Vidwan Velukkudi Varadachariar Swamigal was trained at the patasala on Narayana Mudali Street, in George Town. He then shifted to Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, for higher education. Karapangadu Venkatacharya Swami, Tirupati Jeeyar Swami Sadhu Ramachar and Sri Rangam Desika Varadachariar Swami were his gurus. “He was into Upanyasam when he was 32, thus fulfilling my grandfather's most cherished dream,” says Krishnan.

Bhagavad Gita and Nammazhwar's Tiruvoimozhi were close to the Senior's heart. He presented over 80 month-long lectures on Andal's Tiruppavai, with different interpretations each time.

Born to his parents after sixteen years of their marital life, Krishnan got the best of both forms of education. He was trained at home in the Vedas, Divya Prabhandam, Sanskrit and other related scriptures apart from regular school. Initiation into lectures began when he was eight. He was asked to speak on the last day of a series of his father's lectures for about 10 minutes. The text prepared by his father had to be memorised. This happened throughout his school days and college days too (Vivekananda College, Mylapore, Chennai). Krishnan went on to complete C.A. and ICWA courses before joining the top rung of an MNC. Never did he venture to make solo presentations during his father's life time. A great devotee of Sri Ranganatha, Sri Varadachariar Swamigal breathed his last inside the Srirangam temple after having darshan of the deity one January morning in 1991. That marked the launch of Velukkudi Krishnan on the upanyasam scene. But he found it difficult to strike a balance between his job and lifestyle. Long hauls on business meetings outside Chennai were coming in the way of his nitya karma. Rushing to the Upanyasam stage from corporate meetings well after dusk added to the stress and the decision had to be taken. “I quit lucrative job to dedicate myself to Upanyasam and related activities.”

Krishnan gently shakes his head when reference is made to a “change in profession.” “Please don't call Upanyasam my profession. It is just sharing my own experience. It is neither a trade nor a job. Experiencing the Brahman is bliss and I only want to share it with everyone. Spiritualism does not need special skill or intelligence. Nor can you achieve salvation by memorising the 4,000 verses. The Lord only expects unconditional love. Throughout his life, my father was only trying to make people understand this. If you read the works of the Acharyas, Azhwars and Nayanmars you will see that love was the underlying factor of all their immortal works.

How is he able to quote from scriptures in Tamil and Sanskrit with such precision? “There is no special effort besides deep involvement.” Irrespective of the subject to be dealt with, he recommends at least four hours of reading authentic texts every day. “I am lucky, for all I have to do is read my father's extensive notes on all the subjects. These

are my invaluable assets."

Response to his upanyasams? "Overwhelming. Being the son of an illustrious father, the platform was ready for me but then I had the responsibility of maintaining the standards set by him." He is deeply worried about orators changing concepts to suit the trend while dealing with scriptures. For instance, using the Gita to explain management principles. "The scriptures should be followed to realise the Brahman," he asserts.

Krishnan's two sons are budding technocrats and he has not tried to influence them. However, he has been teaching them Sanskrit and other subjects. Velukkudi Krishnan's discourses have been digitally documented. These CDs and DVDs are also tools that help in the development of his two sons. "My duty is to make them enlightened bhaktas and not trained orators."

"Many feel that Bhakti is for the old. On the contrary, one should attain Atma Gnanam at a very young age like Prahalada. The Bhagavad Gita is one text that should be read by everyone. Assimilating the content may be a difficult task initially, but constant reading will lead to eternal bliss. Tiruppavai too helps in fostering Gnanam."

How does Krishnan preserve his energy and voice? "I enjoy what I speak. It is Ananda for me. While in Ananda, the inflow of positive energy is infinite. This is true in respect of the devotees who also sit through such lectures," Krishnan concludes in typical simple style.

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